

The California Performance Review  
C/o Office of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities

I am hereby voicing my opposition to any proposal to eliminate and my total support for the protection and continuation of the Governor Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. Of all the Special Committees and Boards I am aware of, this is one that truly provides a needed service to a sizeable and growing population of Californians. Individuals find themselves in this group primarily by fate and not through any action of their own. The Americans with Disabilities Act, signed by President George H. W. Bush, signaled the recognition that correction of past discrimination and enhancement of future opportunities for the disabled was necessary. This committee provides California's disabled population opportunities that I have seen literally change the future of people in a positive way in just a few days.

I have been involved with the Committee for over fourteen years, and with their excellent Youth Leadership Forum for high school aged disabled youth for over 8 years. I am a volunteer each year on the transportation committee that assists the students as they arrive at the Forum. From my vantage point, usually as the Airport and ParaTransit liaison, I see each year scores of disabled youth - many who have never had the opportunity to be away from home on their own before - arrive in Sacramento as anxious participants unsure of what will happen to them, and leave as more confident and enthusiastic people. They become graduates of a program that has them looking forward to their chance to become full participants in the school and work world ahead, an opportunity lost without the Committee.

Students who go through the Forum may start unsure of their future but they always leave with a renewed vision of themselves and their abilities. Many have gone on to become hugely successful tax-paying members of the California work force. The funds expended by the Committee return a thousand fold, thanks to the lessons they learn in 5 days one summer of their lives. Without the Governors Committee and the vision of its leadership, this growth-producing segment of the population may not have the opportunity to realize their full potential.

I strongly urge you to remove the Committee from your hit list of fiscal drains, as this is not a wasted or unnecessary government expense. The results of the committee's work generates tax dollars to California in huge numbers for each dollar spent in promoting positive self-image and developing job skills and confidence in those who use the Committee's services. Outreach funds and grants from business and service groups that come to the Committee assures California's Disabled population has a voice in California government and promotes a healthy environment for all Californians, without the Committee there is no vehicle for accepting and utilizing these funds for a group with a need. It is unbelievable to me that in an effort to improve the fiscal condition of California State Government this Committee and its valuable work would be slated for the chopping block. I urge you to remove the Governor Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities from your elimination list. We should be protecting this Committee and the people it serves, not rejecting it.

Sincerely

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